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ABSTRACT

This report describes a pilot project of the West Hartford (Connecticut) Public Schools to help high school graduates who are seriously emotionally disturbed (SED) to successfully transition to community living and to employment. Program services include assessment and planning before graduation as well as support services after beginning college or employment. The collaborative effort involves cost sharing among four school districts and Connecticut's state departments of rehabilitation, education, and mental health. Contents of the report cover: the program rationale; program objectives, types of services currently being provided to targeted high school graduates, agencies and sources of support available to the young adult, outcomes for the first year of this transition project, and results of a follow-up study 6 months after termination of program services. (SW)

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ED 384 159

TRANSITIONING STUDENTS IDENTIFIED AS SERIOUSLY EMOTIONALLY DISTURBED FROM HIGH SCHOOL TO ADULT LIVING

A Collaborative Project
between
The West Hartford Board of Education
and
The State of Connecticut Social Service Agencies

April 8, 1995

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Transitioning Students Identified
as
Seriously Emotionally Disturbed
from
High School to Adult Living

ABSTRACT

The young adult high school graduate with a social and emotional problem is among the most underserved and at risk populations attempting to enter the world of work, higher education and community living. To meet the needs of graduating students identified as SED (Seriously Emotionally Disturbed) to sustain employment or higher education, West Hartford Public Schools received a pilot grant from the Connecticut Bureau of Rehabilitation Services to provide pre- and post-graduation transitional services. The West Hartford Public Schools SED Transition Project proved very successful.

Through the continued support of the Bureau of Rehabilitation Services, the West Hartford Public Schools and a second local public school district, Wethersfield, entered into a collaborative relationship. This relationship was to foster the provision of direct services to students and address needed system changes for the continuation and expansion of SED Transitional Services. The program and collaboration have been successful by providing for a Transition Services Coordinator who is a certified counselor.

The West Hartford Public Schools, and the Connecticut State Department of Education Transition Task Force Interagency Subcommittee have developed a plan to obtain collaborative funding sources for the SED Transition Project. The result has been affordable services through school funding by local educational agencies and state social service agencies. In 1995-96 four school districts will share 25% of the program cost and the Bureau of Rehabilitation Services, State Department of Education and the Department of Mental Health will share the remaining 75% of this program cost. The goals and objectives of this project will parallel the national agenda.

PROGRAM RATIONALE

The special education student identified Seriously Emotionally Disturbed (SED) is one of the most at risk graduates from high school.

The National Longitudinal Transition Study (NLTS) of Special Education students revealed that 50% of students identified as SED entering their freshman year of high school will not graduate. The remaining 50% of students having been maintained in secondary education through an array of support services (ie, Individual and family therapy, social work and case management, vocational and tutorial) will lose most, if not all, support services upon graduation.

The loss of daily structure and support services can precipitate potential graduate and family crisis. During this transition, the graduate is significantly ar-risk for emotional and behavioral deçompensation. The family, once supported by the educational structure and services, is now challenged, at times beyond capacity, to help support and maintain their child's development and functioning on their own. Approximately 50% of students not residing at a post secondary institution will leave home within the first ten months of post-graduation life not to pursue a vocation, but to escape from family turmoil, (1993-94 Transition Project Data). It is this course of events, or time of **unsupported** transition, that contributes to the results of the National Longitudinal Transition Study.

- 35% of the graduates have been arrested (The highest of any group of young adults)
- An increase in psychiatric hospitalizations
- 23 % of graduates remaining unproductive 2 years after graduation

The State of Connecticut Transition Task Force Interagency Subcommittee conducted a regional survey of 36 towns. These results were consistent with the findings of the NLTS.

- 20% of the graduates have had encounters with the juvenile justice system.
- 22% have had psychiatric hospitalizations.
- 237 identified SED students are scheduled for graduation in June 1995.

Clearly these youths are entering an adult society that is placing new demands on them while removing supports that have maintained their success through adolescence. Complicating matters, the needed adult support services have become less available and effective in providing for the transitional needs of the SED young adult.

GOAL

To successfully transition SED students from high school to post high school experiences.

OBJECTIVES

To expand positive learning opportunities and results through effectively transitioning the graduates from school to sustained employment and/or education.

- Assist gradate in obtaining competitive employment or entry into post secondary institutions or training programs.
- Assist and educate student in accessing needed resources and modifications for achieving success.
- Assist graduate to self advocate and self access services.
- Assist graduate with conflict on the job, school, family, and in the community via counseling and twenty-four hour beeper availability.

Collaborations with Families

- Provide educational seminars to parents regarding transitional services prior to graduation and follow up consultative services after graduation.
- Develop and maintain a parent transition network to be used for local, state, and federal lobbying efforts and support as well as provide information and advocacy to other families.

Promote Appropriate Student Assessment

- Review current individual transition plan prior to graduation and recommend further evaluations as needed.
- Develop realistic post secondary goals and objectives with the student through the transitional assessment process prior to graduation.
- Assist student to develop an individual transition support network consisting of friends, family, community, and state resources.

To Create Comprehensive and Collaborative Support Systems for Transition

- Implement SED Transitional Program Model in other school districts.
- Develop comprehensive services around the individual needs of the student and community resources.
- Develop an Advisory Council consisting of participating LEA's and agencies to disseminate information regarding student needs and program performance.

To Provide In-Service Training and Support to Service Providers

- Provide educational seminars to town-wide service providers including community mental health agencies, social services agencies, and vocational-educational sectors regarding transitional services, and the needs of students.

To Strengthen School and Community Communications

- Develop a system of information and lines of communication between school and community resources.

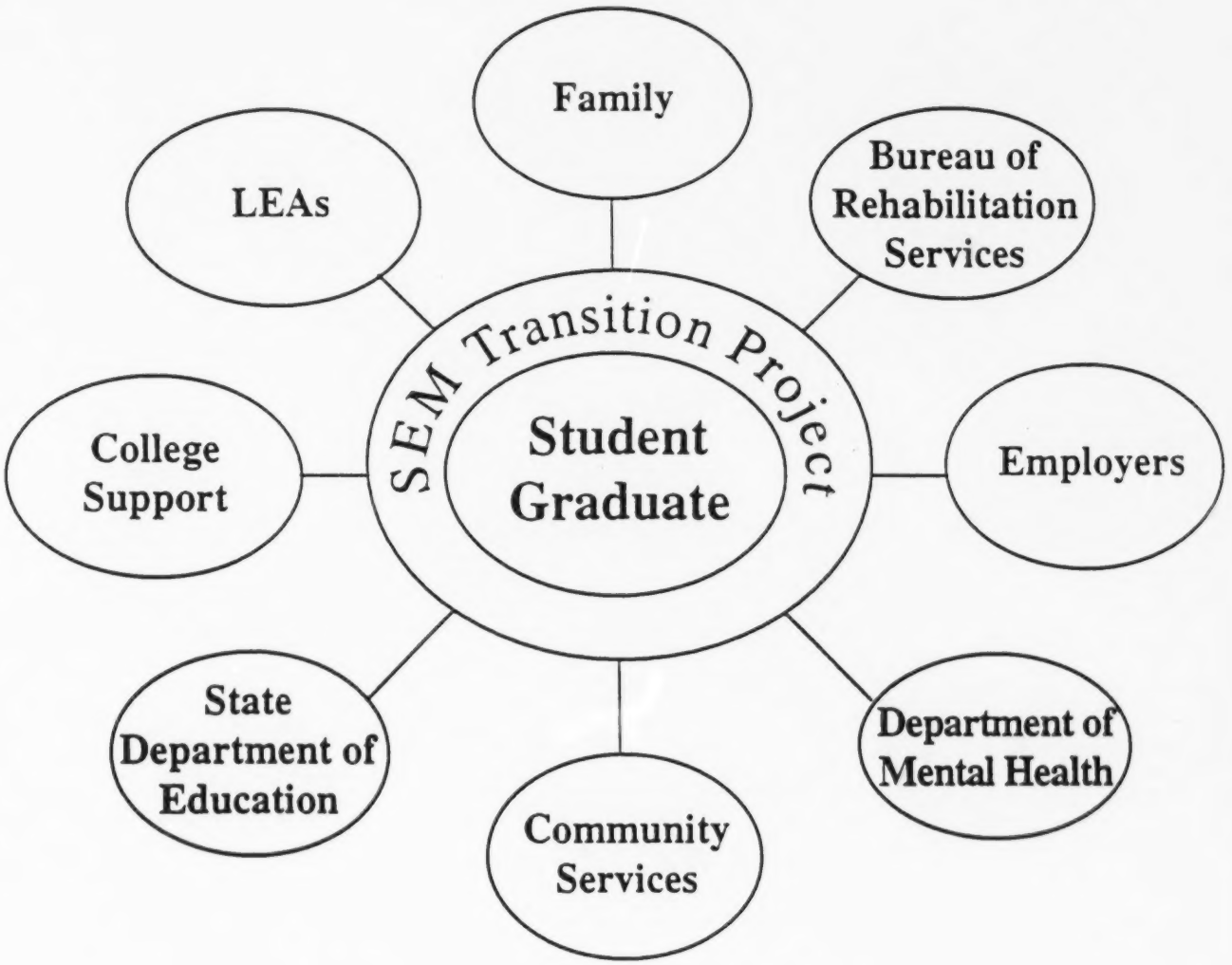
SED TRANSITION PROJECT SERVICES

On May 1, 1993, the project began. The Connecticut Bureau of Rehabilitation Services provided West Hartford Public Schools with the funding for the provision of school and community based Transitional Services to SED graduates.

Services Provided

- Transitional Counseling
- Vocational Counseling
- Psychological Counseling
- Educational Counseling
- Crisis Counseling
- Family Counseling
- Case Management
- Bureau of Rehabilitation Services Referrals
- Department of Mental Health Referrals
- College Support Service Referrals
- Community Support services Referrals
- Job Placement
- College Placement
- Financial Aid Services
- Consultative Services
- 24 Hour Emergency Beeper Availability

Circles of Support and Collaboration



West Hartford Public Schools
West Hartford, Connecticut

SED Transition Project

Outcomes

Year 1

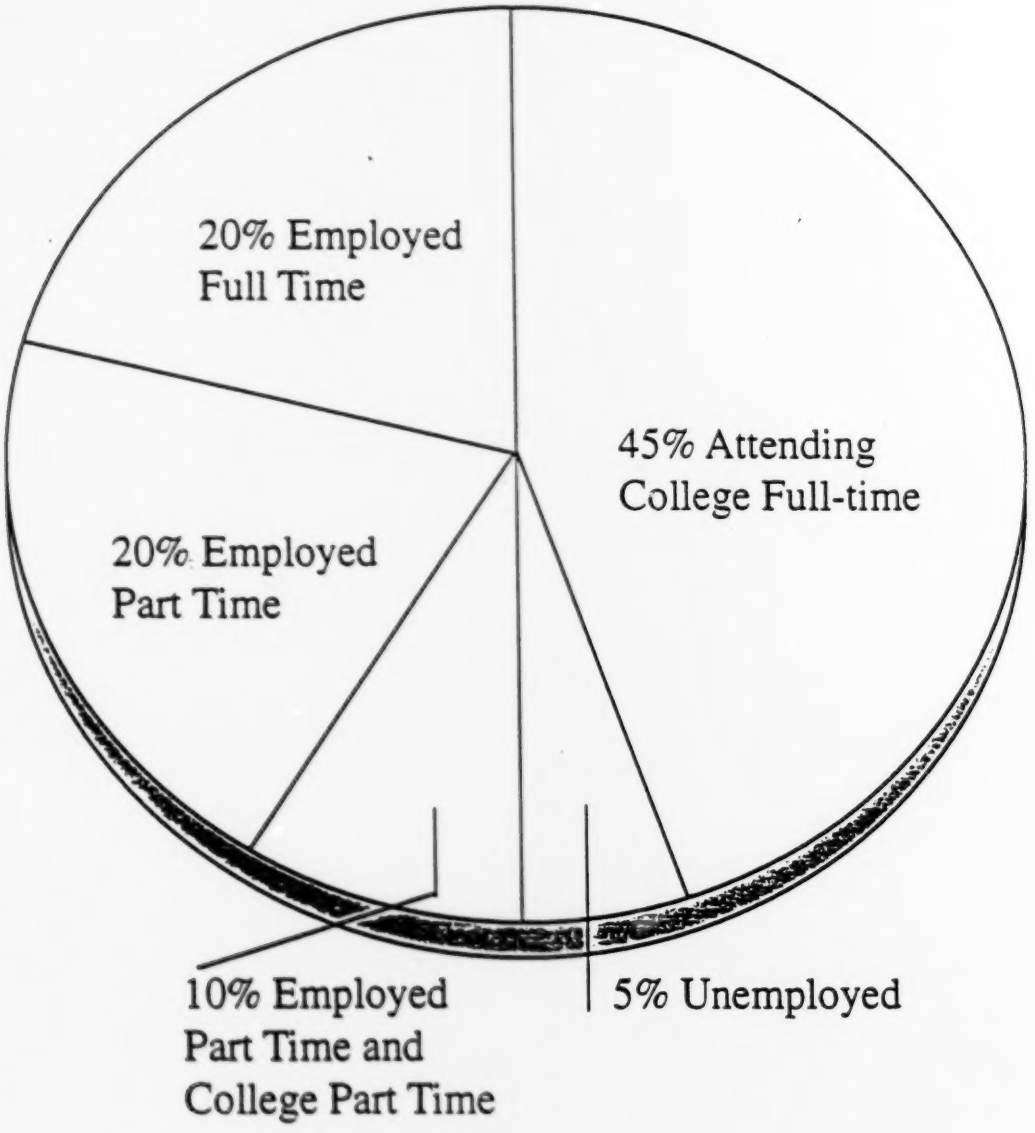
- 95% of graduates productively employed or pursuing further education
- 50% productively employed an average of 32 hours per week
- 45% attending post secondary education full time
- 5% not accessing services, unemployed

6 Month Follow-up Study after Services Ended

- 100% graduates productively employed or pursuing further education: 34.6 average number of hours working or attending college
- 40% employed full time
- 30% attending college full time
- 20% employed part time
- 10% employed part-time and attending college part-time

Post-Secondary Outcomes for Students Identified SED

West Hartford SED Transition Project 93-94



West Hartford Public Schools
West Hartford, Connecticut

WEST HARTFORD PUBLIC SCHOOLS TRANSITION PROJECT

6 MONTH FOLLOW-UP DATA ON 1993 GRADUATES
(AS OF OCTOBER 1, 1994)

Name	College Hours	Employment Hours	Total	Status
BK	35		35	University of Hartford
DR		35	35	Armed Services
DT	35	10	45	Community College, Waldbaums
JF	35	12	47	UConn, Papa Gino's
LW		35	35	Hairdressing School
ML		30	30	Waitress
TJ		20	20	Child Care
TA		35	35	Waldbaum's
AO		25	25	Sports Authority
MM	35		35	Norwich University
BV	10	20	30	Tunxis Community College, Telemarketing
DL		35	35	Green Machine Landscaping
DB		40	40	Walgreen's
GP	35		35	Becker College
KK		35	35	Marshall's
RD		35	35	Temp Replacement Rep
LB	15	20	35	Musician, ECSU
JK		35	35	Laborers Union
MW		20	20	Zax Gym
RM	15	35	50	Furniture Factory, EMT Training

Full Time = 35 hours or more per week

TRANSITION PROJECT

Participant Status Report

January 1995

West Hartford

100%	20 graduates employed or continuing their education
10%	2 students completing secondary education
50%	8 graduates attending college or technical school full time, of whom 4 are employed part-time
15%	3 graduates employed full time
35%	7 graduates employed part time of whom 3 attend college part-time

Wethersfield

90%	9 graduates employed or continuing their education
10%	1 student completing secondary education
20%	2 graduates attending college full time
30%	3 graduates employed full time
20%	2 graduates employed part-time and attending college part-time
10%	1 graduate employed part-time
10%	1 graduate unemployed and not attending college, not accessing services